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SIPDIS

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FOR SA/PAB, SA/PPD (LSCENSNY), SA/RA, INR/R/MR, AND PASS TO
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CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (LCDR FLETCHER),
J45 (MAJ NICHOLLS)

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SUBJECT: Media Reaction: Aftermath of Katrina; Dhaka

Summary: A columnist in Bangla Shamokal says that hurricane Katrina has uncovered the racist character of the U.S. administration.

An article in English "Daily Star" urges Bangladesh to respond to the need of the Americans as America did for Bangladesh in 1993.

Aftermath of Katrina

"The African-American Poor of New Orleans"

An editorial-page article in Bangla language newspaper "Shamokal" by columnist Badruddin Umar opines (9/6):

The face of the U.S. as an imperialist nation is well known to the people of the world. Its face became clearer with the military aggression and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. Hurricane Katrina has uncovered an important side of the U.S. character. It is the United States' serious lack of responsibility to its poor people. Hurricane Katrina has uncovered its racist character, which cannot be obscured by the black American Secretary of State.

It is clear not only to the poor people of New Orleans, but also to the people of the world that the richest and most powerful nation in the world did not do what was needed to deal with hurricane-hit New Orleans.

Now the question is why the Bush administration remained inactive instead of taking special measures to send relief to New Orleans in this serious crisis. Meteorological authorities issued warnings for two or three days before the hurricane has hit. TV stations and newspapers were also publishing reports. But the U.S. administration, in fact, waited for the hurricane to hit without taking the warning into account. President Bush's stooge Secretary of State Rice said at a press conference on September 2 that Americans do not want an American to suffer. She said, "I do not believe that it is decided on the basis of race who will get relief." Whatever she said things happened just the opposite. That's why she has to address the press conference.... It is not a big problem for a nation like the U.S. to deal with the situation. But the reason for not doing this is that those who were affected are Black African American and poor people. The Bush administration and the ruling class have no headache for them. In this respect, there is no difference between the Republicans and the Democrats.

"Bangladesh should offer assistance to Katrina victims"

An article in English language newspaper "Daily Star" by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed from Princeton opines (9/5):

In the aftermath of the hurricane Katrina, America's Gulf Coast has been hit by a calamity an order of magnitude worse than the mid-western flooding of 1993. Thousands of people have died, the historic jazz city of New Orleans, Louisiana, is submerged in water, perhaps for years, and the residents of the entire city have had to be evacuated. Once again, the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi have appealed for help. Generous Bangladeshis and the government of Bangladesh should respond and come to the aid of our American brothers and sisters in their time of need -- with tea, clothes, and everything else -- as soon as possible. Let our poverty not be an excuse.

While America looks for a leader, it sees only a tentative politician in Mr. Bush. Mr. Bush arrived in the region almost a week too late, and only on the day a huge influx of troops and supplies reached the region to mitigate the misery. He first visited Mississippi, a politically solid ground for him. Mr. Bush steered clear of the streets of the major disaster area, New Orleans, whose population is disproportionately black and poor, who could not be trusted

to hail him with open arms, like the white citizens of Mississippi. That, however, is an internal American issue, to be sorted out by the Americans. At this time of America's need, Bangladesh should demonstrate its well-known generosity by stretching out a hand of friendship and by assisting America in every way it can. Not for any quid pro quo, but because it is the humane, charitable and the decent thing to do.

Chammas